

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS Concerning Salem's "Food Scraps Plus" Pilot

Updated as of April 10, 2014

What is the Salem Food Scraps Plus Collection Pilot? Household organic materials are collected by the resident and picked up curbside by a special truck. Residents receiving municipal trash and recycling collection can participate in this program for free and are given a 12 gallon wheeled cart with locking lid and kitchen countertop container. They also receive free compost. Organics collected are composted instead of incinerated with the trash.

What are organics? Organics are materials that break down naturally and can be turned into compost (nutrient rich soil amendment) instead of going in the trash.

Why is Salem conducting this pilot organics program? Organics diversion to composting is one of the major strategies to further reduce our waste. This 2 year collection pilot will provide us with valuable information to enhance our other diversion efforts (recycling and leaf and yard waste composting). We will be tracking how much food waste and soiled paper are diverted from the trash, and hopefully build support for city-wide collection.

Why Compost? Eliminating food waste and compostable paper means less trash and lower disposal costs for the City. The City currently pays almost \$62 per ton to dispose of its trash in a municipal waste combustor in Haverhill. Fewer food scraps in trash means less disposal costs, less transportation, and less incineration/pollution. By composting, we are turning a waste into a resource (compost) that we can use again. Collected food waste will go to a nearby farm composting facility and the compost created will be used by the farmers.

Why is Composting better than putting my food scraps in my garbage disposal?

Decreased use of garbage disposals means saving water and electricity while also preserving the quality of our waterways. Food scraps are organics which increase Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) at our wastewater treatment plant adding to the cost of treating our wastewater. By removing these organics, the treatment plant can function more efficiently, save in the daily cost of operation while also helping marine wildlife and habitat thus improving our estuaries.

Who can participate? Most Salem households receiving municipal trash and recycling collection are eligible.

What is the cost? There is no fee for eligible households to participate in this collection program.

What day is pick up? Initially all households will be picked up on Wednesday.

How will I store my food scraps? Through a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) grant, all participants will be provided with a 12-gallon wheeled cart with a locking lid to put your organic waste into for curbside collection, along with a kitchen countertop collection bucket.

Can I use a different container (inside or outside the house) from what you supply? It is important that all participants use the supplied green wheeled cart for curbside collection. This is what the collection vendor will be looking for. You can use / purchase your own container inside the house.

How will the food scraps be collected? A customized sealed dump truck (allowing for no leakage) will pick up the food waste curbside.

Is there a limit to the acceptable food scraps that I can put out for collection? Yes, food scraps should not exceed the capacity of the 12-gallon wheeled cart. **In the future, additional carts may be available for purchase.**

Where will the collected food scraps be composted? They will be brought to North Shore farms that are permitted (either by the MassDEP or by the Mass Dept. of Agriculture) to accept food scraps for composting.

How will diverting my food scraps save the City money? Based on other community results, the program anticipates removing over 500 pounds of organic waste per participating household per year from the trash stream, thus reducing our cost to dispose of it. The City currently pays almost \$62 per ton to incinerate its trash at the Covanta municipal waste combustor; this will increase to \$64 on July 1, 2014. The cost of composting is included in the collection cost. This program is expected to benefit the city both financially and environmentally.

When does the pilot collection start?

Wednesday, April 16, 2014.

When does the pilot collection end?

The current contract is for 2 years, with a possible one year extension.

Can I join after the pilot has started, April 2014?

The current grant allows for up to 1,500 carts and the City will continue to add new residents until that goal is reached (before December 2014). We expect to start a second phase in May or June. Please go to GreenSalem.com and fill out a short survey if you wish to participate.

What is accepted? (Not to exceed capacity of 12-gallon cart)

- Raw or cooked meat and bones
- Raw or cooked fish, including bones and shells
- Dairy products, eggs and eggshells
- Pasta, bread, grains and cereals
- Fruit and vegetables, including pits and shells
- Cake, cookies, candies including gum
- Coffee grounds with filters and tea bags
- Soup, stews, yogurt
- Cooking oil, grease
- House plants, flowers, floral trimmings
- Hair (human and animal), fur
- Soiled paper (paper towels, napkins, pizza disks) NO CHEMICALS
- Waxed cardboard, wax paper (but no cardboard milk & juice cartons)
- Animal bedding (from bird /hamster cages) including waste
- Sawdust, wood chopsticks
- Wine corks (not plastic!)
- Wood stove and fireplace Ash
- Tissues, paper towels, paper napkins (no blood or feces)
- Paper cotton swabs and cotton balls
- Bunny, chicken, hamster pet waste
- Coconut shells
- Nut shells
- Cotton balls

What is Not Accepted?

- Leaves (compost in backyard, put out on curbside collection weeks or bring to Transfer Station on Swampscott Road)
- Branches (bring to Transfer Station on Swampscott Road)
- **Plastic bags!!!** (line your bin with paper bag, paper towels or newspaper)
- **Plastic of any kind including so-called biodegradable plastic**
- **Cartons-milk, juice, etc.**
- Sticks, dirt, pebbles
- Cigarettes
- Dead animals
- Dental floss
- Diapers
- Dog or cat waste
- Cat litter
- Dryer Sheets
- Sanitary products
- Textiles
- Wipes with chemicals (baby or disinfectant)
- Wood
- Any non-compostable take-out containers (ask at point of purchase if containers are compostable)
- Dryer lint
- Paper with Chemicals

How can I minimize odors in my food waste collection cart?

- Rinse it out often
- Use a paper bag or newspaper as a liner and sprinkle with baking soda (to absorb wetness & odor)
- Compost napkins, paper towels and other soiled paper
- Wrap meat, fish in newspaper or paper bags
- Freeze food waste before collection
- Use approved compostable bags (see below)-NOTE: biodegradable bags are not acceptable!!
- clean out any dripped materials
- Stainless steel container (for inside the house) may result in fewer odors

Can I put my food in plastic bags and then put it in the organics cart?

No! Plastic bags are a contaminant. You will risk turning an entire load of compostable material into garbage if you use plastic bags. You may use small compostable bags (available at Crosby's and Whole Foods) to line your container; then tie and deposit into your 12-gallon container. These must meet ASTM D6400 standards.

Should I freeze my compostable material?

Many residents in other communities chose to keep their food scraps, etc. in the freezer. An easy way to do this is to use the plastic 'clamshell' containers that pre-washed salads and baked goods come in. Keep your items frozen in these containers, then pop the frozen food scraps into the compost container on Weds. morning. You can re-use the plastic clamshells. **DO NOT INCLUDE THE PLASTIC IN THE COMPOST CART.**

What if fruit flies appear?

Create a countertop fruit fly trap (e.g. small saucer of cider vinegar, or paper cone in narrow bottle containing banana slice or cider vinegar). A tiny drop of dishwashing detergent in the watering can for plants will make plant soil inhospitable.

Can I use compostable bags? Only compost facility approved compostable bags that are certified compostable by the BPI (Biodegradable Products Institute) meeting ASTM D6400 standard are acceptable (such as BioBags, Bag to Nature, Veg ware and Natur-Bag). As of March 25, 2014 these bags are available at Crosby's and Whole Foods; we hope other stores will begin carrying them soon.

Can I leave the paper yard bags out with the cart for pickup?

NO

Why aren't leaves accepted? They're organic.

The City offers leaf and yard waste collection 6 times annually, the 2014 calendar is included in the Park and Rec booklet mailed to each household in the spring, as well as on line at Salem.com. Additionally, you can drop off your leaf and yard waste at the Transfer Station at 12 Swampscott Road during regular business hours. It is open to all residents with proof of residency and a non-commercial vehicle registered in Salem. It is open on Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Saturday 7:30-11:30. Call to confirm hours around holidays.

Food scraps are very dense and do not need to be compacted. Leaves on the other hand, tend to be light (when dry) and would quickly fill up the collection truck, which would increase number of trips to compost facility and increase our cost.

Why aren't other items included in Acceptable List? The disposal facility determines what can be included, ensuring a quality finished compost product.

Can I continue to backyard compost? Yes, you may continue to backyard compost. At the same time, we also encourage you to participate in the pilot, if eligible. There are some additional items that you can't compost at home that are accepted in the Food Scraps Plus Collection Pilot such as meat and fish products.

How long is the composting process – from time delivered to finished product? Composting time, start to finish, is usually about a year.

When and where can I pick up finished compost? This will be determined in coming months. The City will arrange for periodic deliveries of usable compost to Mack Park; participants in this program can take up to 6 gallons (1/2 of your compost container capacity) annually; you will be responsible for bringing your own containers and shovels.

How long will this program operate? The DEP grants, which funded both purchase of wheeled carts and Technical Assistance, require that the pilot program operate for a minimum of two years

What will happen when the pilot is up?

We hope there is enough interest to support the program and it will be continued.

How can we protect our carts from theft?

Please put your address on your cart with a label or marker.

Please place your Curbside Composting cart separately from any other trash or recycling receptacles on your collection day.

If you are interested in joining this program, go to GreenSalem.com and fill out a short survey.

Please contact Julie Rose at jrose@salemcom, 978-619-5679 with additional questions